

John G. Kennedy House  
423 Chaucer Street  
Palo Alto  
Santa Clara County  
California

HABS No. CA-2076

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

J.G. KENNEDY HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2076

Location: 423 Chaucer St.  
Palo Alto, Santa Clara County, California

USGS Palo Alto Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 10-575040.4145620

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Channel Wasson, 423 Chaucer St.  
Palo, Alto, California 94301

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Wasson

Present Use: Residence

Significance: This spacious residence is an excellent and representative work of Julia Morgan, a prominent California architect during the early twentieth century who was patronized by the Hearst family and designed many YWCA's, clubs, and residences, including William Randolph Hearst's "San Simeon."

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This large house in the Spanish Colonial Revival style was designed by architect Julia Morgan in the early nineteen twenties.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

## B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The five bay, U-shaped building is approximately forty-five feet by sixty feet and has two stories and a partial basement.
2. Foundation: Concrete
3. Walls: Stucco on wood studs, painted white. A wall extends from this house on each end across the front with a large plaster scroll on top at this juncture with the house. There is a red Spanish tile coping along the top.
4. Structural system, framing: Wooden frame structure.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The inset porch on the southwest facade is the main entry. The floor of the porch, covered with red quarry tile, projects approximately two feet from the face of the house, and is one step up from the sidewalk. There is a large round arched opening in the facade of the house leading into the porch. Across the rear of the house, there is a concrete terrace between two wings that project from the main house. The concrete floor is scored to simulate tiles and the two brick steps lead down to a brick semi-circular terrace. There is a wooden louvered screen on each side of the upper

terrace that extends out from the walls. There is a concrete stoop with three concrete steps at the utility room on the southeast facade. There are two second floor roof decks on the rear facade over the projecting wings on each side. The railing around them is a low stuccoed parapet wall and each has an asphalt roof covering painted silver and a wooden roof walk.

6. Chimneys: There is a large projecting fireplace chimney near the center of the front facade that extends from the ground up through the overhanging eaves. The stuccoed walls narrow down in width after it passes through the eave, and there is a gabled Chimney hood covered with red mission tile. The hood projects over the face slightly on each side and has a rounded arch opening on each end, with three rectangular openings on each side. There is a stuccoed chimney on the rear of the house near the right side that has two clay flues projecting above the top. One is used as a vent for the furnace and the other is for a flue opening in the kitchen.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the southwest facade has a round arched opening, recessed from the facade. The large wooden door has double raised panels in the lower two-thirds. There are three square panels across the top and bottom with a row of four slender vertical panels between. The upper one third has a row of four patterned glass panels across with three panels above forming the top of the arch. There are wide stiles and rails between each wood and glass panel. The mail slot is the center of the panels immediately under the glass panels and there is a large brass ring door handle on the interior and exterior. There is a doorway to the exterior from the loggia. The wooden frame door has eight glass panels, wooden surround, metal threshold and there is a four light glass panel sidelight on each side. The door has a brass oval knob.

A doorway leads from the pantry to the exterior shed. The wooden door has a recessed panel below a four-light glass panel, wooden surround and wooden threshold. The doorway from the utility room to the exterior has a wooden door with a panel below a down-sliding glass panel with screen, wooden surrounds, metal threshold and a one light transom with insect screen. Exterior doorways on the second floor leading from the hallway to the roof decks have wooden doors with six glass panels above a small wooden panel, wooden surround, wooden threshold and a screen door.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows on the first floor have two and three light casement sashes with wooden framed screens on the interior. The jambs splay in toward the sash on both the exterior. On the exterior the wooden sills are stepped and on the interior there are wide sills. Wooden windows on the second floor are similar, but with only two light casement sashes. At

the southwest front facade near the center and the northwest facade in the center, second floor, there is a pair of long wooden casement windows with four light sashes, a sill raised above the floor and on the exterior is a small wrought iron balcony. The balcony on the front facade is very decorative and has scrolled brackets at each side. Around the stair well on the second floor there are wooden windows with eight-light fixed sashes along the northeast wall and eight light casement sashes on each end.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hipped roof covered with red Spanish tile. The loggia has a shed roof with a built-up asphalt and gravel covering. The flat roofs over each rear wing roof deck have asphalt roofing painted silver.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Open eaves, metal gutters and downspouts. The large leader on the downspout on the front elevation has a large raised shell design on the face.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: There is a cellar under the central part of the house that has a concrete floor and walls and houses the furnace and is used for storage.
- b. First floor: The main entrance on the southwest near the left side leads into an entrance hall. On the right is a round arched opening to the living room, on the left, a matching opening directly opposite leading into the hallway and straight ahead double doorway leading onto the loggia. The living room has a fireplace in the center of the southwest wall with a window on each side. Next to the window on the side wall is a built-in bookcase with adjustable shelves. There is a cabinet built in below each window. On the northeast wall is a window opening onto the loggia. The dining room is entered through a large sliding pocket doorway. In the center of the southeast wall. In the dining room there is a window in the center of the southwest wall with built-in cupboards on each side and below the window, a window in the center of the southeast wall, a doorway to the pantry on the northeast wall and built-in shelves along the northeast wall. The pantry opens into the kitchen on the northeast wall and has built-in cupboards along the northwest wall. There is a doorway to the shed on the southeast wall. The kitchen has a window above the cabinets on the southeast wall, a doorway to the utility room and larder on the northeast wall,

a window opening onto the loggia on the northwest wall and an opening to the rear hall on the southwest wall. There is a half-bath off the utility room, and a rear door to the exterior. There is a small closet in both the larder and utility room. The rear hall leads back into the loggia, which is set-in between the two rear wings. The stairway to the cellar is under the main stairway to the second floor along the southwest wall. The northeast wall has a doorway to the terrace in the center and windows on each side. The narrow hallway off the entrance leads to a bedroom at either end, each with a private bath and closets. There is a row of closets along the northwest wall in the hallway.

c. Second floor: The second floor is reached by the main stairway in the loggia, leading up into a long narrow hallway along the northeast wall. At each end of the hallway is a bathroom. There are three bedrooms on the southwest side of the hallway. The master bedroom on the northwest end opens into the bathroom on the northeast and an opening from the bath leads to a dressing room. There is a doorway leading to the two roof decks at each end of the hallway.

2. Stairways: The open-string wooden stairway leads up from the loggia to a landing, turns and extends two more steps to the second floor. The wrought iron handrail extends from a scroll at the newel position up about two-thirds the way and curves in toward the stair slightly, extending up and forming a railing around the landing. There is a wooden band around the landing in the loggia and a band at each tread as they extend up.

The stairway to the cellar is an enclosed wooden stairway that extends down under the main stairway.

3. Flooring: There is narrow board wooden flooring in principal rooms on the first and second floor. Some are covered with carpeting and rugs. The floor in the loggia is concrete painted brick red, scored to resemble square tiles. The kitchen, utility room and pantry floors are covered with linoleum. Bathrooms have ceramic tile floors.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings on both floors are plaster, some wallpapered and some painted. There is a simple wooden chair rail in the kitchen forming a wainscot. The bathrooms and pantry have a chair rail and hardboard scored to resemble tile. There is wooden paneling on one wall in the first floor hall. The ceiling in the second floor hallway has a shallow barrel vault and the ceilings in the bedrooms have sloping sides and flat centers. The ceiling in the loggia is wooden with exposed wooden beams. The utility room has beveled vertical wooden paneling and ceiling. There is a deep cornice molding at the wall and ceiling junction on the first floor.

5. Doorways and doors: The wooden doorways have wooden panel doors that have a raised triangular piece at the center of the top and bottom rail and the center of each stile. The wooden surrounds have plinths and wooden thresholds. The large wooden sliding door between the living and dining rooms has four panels in each bay with stiles between to resemble three doors. There is an eight light round-arched head, wooden door between the loggia and the kitchen. The doorway to the cellar has a wooden door with round-arched head, board and batten with large black strap iron hinges. There is a pair of doors leading from the entry to the loggia. The wooden, full-louver panels, have a wooden threshold and a wooden panel sidelight on each side.
6. Special decorative features, trim, and cabinetwork: There is a recessed cupboard in the entry with heavy raised wooden panel doors. Each door has a large brass ring pull at the top. There is a recessed bookcase with round-arched head on either side of the living room. The bookshelf has a vertical, beveled wooden paneling back and wooden adjustable shelves. Cabinets are under windows in the living room on each side of the fireplace. The wooden doors have diamond shaped raised panels with a large round wooden knob in the center. The carved knob has a flower in the center. There is a long narrow panel on each end of the cabinet that has bell-like figures carved in each. The fireplace in the living room has a wooden mantelpiece with a wooden molding around the stone facing. There is brick around the firebox opening. All has been painted. The hearth is stone. In the dining room there is a cupboard on each side of a window with a credenza underneath the window. The wooden doors have large raised panels with round brass knobs. The cupboards in the pantry have eight-light glass door panels in the upper section. The countertop is wooden.
7. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Gas-fired forced air. Grilles are built-in the walls at the floor line. There is a floor grill in the hallway on the first floor.
  - b. Lighting: Modern lighting fixtures. There is a large crystal chandelier in the dining room and a small hanging light fixture in the entry hall. There is a hanging light fixture in the stairwell and two hanging light fixtures in the loggia. The fixtures in the loggia have four light bulbs hanging from a wrought iron grille.
  - c. Plumbing: Modern plumbing fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on the northeast side of the street, approximately in the middle of the block. Residential structures surround the house on each side, across the street and behind. At the front is red brick paving at the curb and a concrete sidewalk next to that. There are numerous shrubbery plants across the

front. There is a wrought iron gate at the front of the house on the right side, leading up a concrete drive to a carport at the rear. The open carport has a flat roof supported by wooden columns. The floor has exposed aggregate concrete with wooden dividers. The rear yard has several very large oak and coniferous trees as well as flowers and shrubs. There are brick sidewalks leading around the yard from the brick terrace.

Prepared by: John P. White  
Project Supervisor  
July 1980

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION:

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's National Architectural and Engineering Record in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara, California. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS and Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect, the project was completed during the summer of 1980 at the HABS Field Office, Santa Clara, California by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Associate Professor of Architecture Texas Tech. University); David T. Marsh, Jr., Project Foreman (Howard University); Jeffery Flemming, Project Historian (University of Chicago); Jane Lidz, Architect/Photographer; and student Architects Kimberley E. Harden (Auburn University); Melody S. Linger (University of Florida); and Mathew Poe (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).